

Mistletoes of Southern Australia

by David M Watson; Illustrations by Robyn Hulley

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, 2011. 200 pages, paperback. ISBN 9780643095939. RRP \$49.95

At long last we have a book on the wonderfully fascinating mistletoes of southern Australia. I opened this book with a great deal of anticipation and pleasure and I have not been disappointed. David Watson and Robyn Hulley have together produced a book that deals not only with the identification of mistletoes, but includes also their biology, ecology, cultural significance and management. It informs the land manager and field naturalist and tells them all they need to know about these plants that have evolved the semi-parasitic way of life. The watercolour illustrations of all species make this a beautiful book as well.

The author aims to raise awareness of these 'distinctive and beautiful native plants'. He aims to dispel some of the misunderstandings and unfounded beliefs that these plants are toxic, that they are not native to Australia and they kill trees. I think he achieves these aims and we are made aware of the fascinating biology and ecology of these plants. Clearly, they contribute significantly to the biodiversity of our bush and landscapes. Several honeyeaters rely on mistletoe nectar; the Mistletoebird feeds on the fruit – and distributes the embryo. There are insects such as the Imperial White butterfly and the Mistletoe Moth that depend on mistletoes as food plants for their larvae.

In his Preface, the author points out that

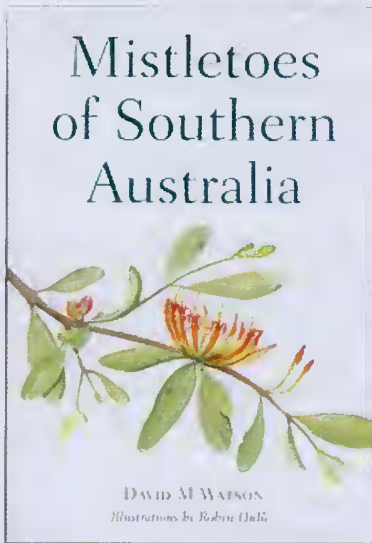
... A great deal has been written about Australian Mistletoes, but this material is difficult to access and beyond the reach of most people. Detailed species descriptions, identification keys and distribution summaries are available in the national and state-based Floras ...

This is obviously true, but in my view it under-values the capacity of the keen land manager or the enthusiastic field naturalist to cope with the more technical aspects of plant science. However, he has brought together a mass of scientific information and presented it in a very accessible and readable form. A similar approach was

taken by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria in the early 1990s with the Forum on Mistletoes in Victoria (proceedings published in *The Victorian Naturalist* 1997).

Descriptions of the 46 species found in southern Australia (below the 26th parallel latitude) comprise a significant section of the book (a checklist of all 91 currently recognised mistletoes of Australia is given on pages 173-175). They are arranged in alphabetical order, genera and species. Each species is described with the diagnostic characteristics highlighted in bold type. Distribution, habitat type, main hosts and associated species are described and there is a photograph and a distribution map, all on the same page. The page is headed by the botanical name and the most accepted common name; alternative common names are also given. Given that keys to mistletoe identification are given in the different state Floras, I feel a key would help readers to identify a particular species without having to thumb through all the descriptions.

Opposite this descriptive page is a full-page watercolour illustration of the species by Robyn Hulley. These illustrations are a major contribution to the beauty of the book and certainly help in the process of identification. Unfortunately in a few instances the detail structure of the inflorescence or flower are not clearly visible and there would be justification to make a larger, separate illustration of these structures. For instance the detailed floral structure of *Nuytsia floribunda* is not clear, and individual drawings of the difference in floral arrangements in the triads of *Amyema pendulum* and *A. miquelii* would greatly assist in identification of these species. The flowers of members of the Viscaceae are very small and play little part in the identification of species, the habit illustrations are beautiful, but I would like to see, again through a magnified illustration, the details of the flowers of this group.



There are few typographical errors to detract from the flow of the language. Probably the most irritating one to the author and publisher would be on the Content page where the *Viscaceae* is listed as *Visaceae*.

All in all, this is a wonderful book and I recommend it strongly to all land managers and field naturalists. To all bushwalkers and gardeners in southern Australia, this is a book of interest and will, no doubt, deepen your appreciation and love of the Australian bush and landscape. In some situations management and control of mistletoes is necessary, and the book gives clear advice on how such management can be achieved. Congratulations to all concerned.

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Forest Phoenix: How a great forest recovers after wildfire

by David Lindenmayer, David Blair, Lachlan McBurney
and Sam Banks; Photography by David Blair

Publisher: *CSIRO, Collingwood, Victoria, 2010. 128 pages, paperback.*
ISBN 9780643100343. RRP \$39.95

This is such a good book. I know that a reviewer should avoid such emotive language, but it couldn't be helped. This is such a good book.

The logical sequence of the book is compelling, starting with an introduction based around the 2009 wildfires in the tall montane forests immediately north and east of Melbourne. The reader is led from a gut reaction at the fires' ferocity and apparent destructiveness, into an appreciation of the characteristics of such huge conflagrations and the post-fire environment. The next chapter is a positive ramble through forest regeneration, thence to animal recovery. The last chapter discusses the various changes that human settlement has brought to these forests — changes in the ecological impacts, intensity, ubiquity and long-term effects of our involvement with these forests. As a result, the reader is led into the contentious issues (fire management, logging, carbon storage, water yield, biodiversity conservation) only after considerable insight into forest processes has been

gained. This is an even-handed and informed consideration of the issues involved in these forests. Polemic and partisanship are virtually non-existent, allowing readers to bring their own perspective to a consideration of these issues. Would that all political controversies were so carefully, thoughtfully and respectfully treated.

The illustrations are a highlight of the book. 'Every picture tells a story' is as true of the illustrations in this luxuriously illustrated book as it was of *Doan's Backache Kidney Pills* in the early 20th century (an early origin for this phrase). In *Forest Phoenix* the pictures are of consistently high quality and none is wasted. The story each picture tells is amply illuminated by the brief but informative text that accompanies each. Indeed, the book is so lavishly illustrated that it's close to a 'coffee table' format and most determinedly not intimidating for the vast majority of us who are not at the forefront of scientific research (as these authors clearly are). Al-